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ABSTRACT

The success of schools depends in large measure on the effectiveness of school administrators. A major component of administrator effectiveness is human relations skills. Over the past 20 years, a large and systematic body of knowledge and training methods in human relations skills has been developed in counselor education. Given the collegial proximity of counselor educators and administrator educators, counselor educators are in a favorable position to collaborate with administrative educators and make a substantial contribution to human relations skills development for school administrators. School administrators exercise an influential role not only in student learning but also in human development generally. While counselor educators are not experts in the field of educational administration, they nevertheless have counseling-specific expertise that is applicable to school administrators. By collaborating with administrator educators in the area of human relations skills, counselor educators may contribute substantially to the broader welfare of students and schools. Elements of a course based on these principles and entitled "Human Relations in Educational Management" are described in this paper. The elements concern: counseling perspective and school administration; scope and function of human relations in educational administration; education as an open human system and communication theory; interpersonal communication skills; power, cooperation, and organizational communication; and the human environment. (ABL)

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HUMAN RELATIONS SKILLS IN ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING
A COUNSELOR EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE AND CONTRIBUTION

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Abstract

The success of schools depends in large measure on the effectiveness of school administrators. A major component of administrator effectiveness is human relations skills. Over the past twenty years, a large and systematic body of knowledge and training methods in human relations skills has been developed in counselor education. Given the collegial proximity of counselor educators and administrator educators, counselor educators are in a favorable position to collaborate with administrator educators and make a substantial contribution to human relations skills development for school administrators.

This paper discusses the rationale for such a collaborative contribution and describes the major elements of a course in human relations skills for school administrators.

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Schooling is predominantly a human relations enterprise. Considered from any professional viewpoint--teachers, administrators, support personnel--and from any disciplinary vantage--pedagogical, sociological, psychological--schooling involves extensive human interactions. School effectiveness research has highlighted the school principal's leadership role in constructive human relations (Edmunds & Frederikson, 1978).

Counselor educators, because of their expertise and collegial proximity to administrator educators, are in a position to significantly influence the development of effective human relations in the schools. The growing body of knowledge in interpersonal skills training (Kurtz, Marshall, & Banspach, 1985) has led many counselor educators into human relations training for teachers. There is little evidence, however, that counselor educators have much direct influence on the human relations competencies of school administrators. A typical concern of counselor educators has been that administrators should be trained to work effectively with counselors (Lampe, 1985). This is quite different from direct involvement in developing human relations skills in school administrators.

Here, it is proposed that counselor educators consider applications of their particular human relations expertise to school administrator training. This article describes approaches to collaboration between counselor and administrator educators, and

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more specifically, a course in human relations for educational administrators. It is based on the author's experience, both as a faculty colleague and college administrator, in developing and offering a human relations course for administrators.

Collaboration with Administration Education

Collaboration between counselor education and school administration faculty must be built on professional trust. For counselor educators this means demonstrating a respect for the importance of school administrators' work, an understanding of the requirements of that work, and a familiarity with the body of knowledge informing administrator education. The author's experience suggests several steps or activities for building trust and collaboration. They are:

- Having substantive conversations, especially as inquirers, with school administration faculty about the training and work requirements of school administrators in human relations.
- Engaging in discussions with school administrators in the field. On-site practicum supervision provides opportunities for listening to the needs of principals and other school administrators.
- Taking on short-term or long-term administrative assignments and consciously integrating human relations skills into one's work.
- Educating oneself in administrative science and its applications for human relations in schools.
- Offering to collaborate with administrator educators especially in the human relations skills area. (Collaboration should go both ways. This article is limited to the application of counselor educators' expertise to school administration.)

In the author's case these collaborative activities resulted in an invitation from educational administration faculty to revise and teach a graduate course entitled, "Human Relations in Educational Management." The purpose of the course is the development of interpersonal communication competencies in the context of school administration.

Elements of a Course

Counseling Perspective and School Administration

Counseling and counselor education consist of a body of knowledge, set of attitudes, and repertoire of interpersonal and technical competencies by which the counselor is able to assist other persons recognize, value, and develop their own

potentialities for productive and satisfying living, problem-solving, and decision-making. This core human development perspective provides an essential guide for organizing related material on human relations from the fields of management science and educational administration. This perspective is especially well suited both to the human intensive aspect of schooling and the leadership qualities required of school administrators.

The course described here is organized in five areas: (a) Scope and function of human relations in educational administration; (b) Education as an open human system, and communication theory; (c) Interpersonal communication skills; (d) Power, cooperation, and organizational communication; (e) The human environment. The section on interpersonal communications skills forms the core of the course. The other sections provide context and applications.

Scope and Function of Human Relations in Educational Administration

In this course human relations are approached in the context of the overall responsibilities of school administrators. Schools administration is powerfully influenced and shaped both by the overriding objective of student learning and intense interplay of diverse constituencies.

Schools are organized to achieve their primary goal of student learning through classroom teachers. Thus, school administrators must possess human relations competencies for working effectively with adult professionals. This interaction is complicated by the highly structured, hierarchical bureaucracy of public schools. This professional-bureaucratic interface has important human relations applications (Hanson, 1985; Hoy & Miskel, 1982). For example, democratic, non-defensive relationship skills by principals may be related to higher levels of teacher participation, influence, and satisfaction (Imber, 1983; Imber & Dukes, 1984). A democratic style of leadership may also be associated with school counselor satisfaction (Cummings & Nall, 1982).

While most authors discuss educational administration as a synthesis of management models, human relations competencies invariably hold a major place (see, for example, Hanson, 1985; Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Knezevich, 1984; Monahan & Hengst, 1982; Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980). Under what is called person models (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1980), one can distinguish either a human relations approach or a human resources approach (Miles, 1965). The former emphasizes individual needs, such as belonging and being liked; it may fall into paternalism. The latter emphasizes individuals' capacity to contribute and their desire to achieve through meaningful work (Strauss & Sayles, 1980).

It is closely akin to McGregor's Theory Y (1960) and pervades the practice of successful corporations (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

The person model with a human resource emphasis is in line with the human development perspective of counselor educators. In this article, the term "human relations" is used, not in the paternalistic sense, but with a human resource and human development orientation.

Education As An Open Human System and Communication Theory

Open systems theory is presented in the course as a systematic and flexible framework for understanding the dynamic and multi-purpose function of human relations competencies in the total school system and its environment (Hanson, 1985). Systems theory has been frequently applied in counseling (Amerikaner, 1983). Because a human system is predominantly a study of communication in an organization (McFarland, 1974), it is well suited for linking administrators' human relations skills to the school organization.

Communication theory serves as the conceptual link between systems theory and the specific skills of interpersonal communication. A comprehensive model of communication specifies the critical elements in such a system--the sender's world (speaker, source, encoding), the message (including channel or medium, noise), and the receiver's world (listener, decoding, destination)--for the sharing of meaning and the exercise of influence (Lysaught, 1984).

Interpersonal Communication Skills

The school administrator's repertoire of interpersonal communication skills is critical to facilitating the professional productivity and creativity of teachers and sustaining supportive interactions within the school system and with the community. Training in these skills is the core of the course, and in this training counselor educators can make their strongest contribution.

A substantial body of knowledge in interpersonal skills training has been developed over the past 20 years in counseling (Marshall & Kurtz, 1982). This knowledge provides an important refinement on the notions of "speaker" and "listener," as found in communication theory. Counselors clearly know that the "speaker," understood in terms of the "lead person" in communication, must be an effective listener in order subsequently to be influential in effecting change. As a "lead person" in providing an effective communication system in the school, a school administrator must possess attending, listening, and responding skills as indispensable complements to personalizing and initiating skills.

School administrator trainees, given their career orientation in the managerial ranks of a bureaucratic system, may be especially subject to the common belief that speaking in fact means speaking, helping means advising, and leading means initiating. Experience suggests that school administrator trainees are similar to beginning counselor trainees: attending and responding skills (listening, respect, empathy) are accepted in theory, at first appear easy, and then turn out to be low in trainees' interpersonal repertoires and difficult to master and sustain in practice. Because school administrator trainees are geared to positions that require leadership initiative, the course must establish clearly the connection between effectiveness in attending and responding and effectiveness in leading, initiating, and directing.

Equally important to administrator training are the initiative skills of personalizing, constructive confrontation, and problem solving, and the related skill of assertiveness. Through systematic training procedures in initiative interpersonal skills (see, for example, Anthony & Vitalo, 1982; Egan, 1982), adapted to typical administrative interactions, the course provides both precision in skill development and clarity in the conceptual framework underlying these skills.

In counseling the goal of interpersonal skills is to help clients make positive behavioral changes in their lives. In a course for administrators, the human relations goal must be specified differently. For administrators the goal of interpersonal leadership skills is to facilitate among teachers and other school professionals conditions conducive to student learning and professional satisfaction, and between the schools and the community lines of communication conducive to mutual understanding and support.

Power, Cooperation, and Organizational Communication

This course component relates human relations skills to leadership issues. First, an analysis of power distinguishes between power for achieving compliance despite resistance and power for exercising influence by enlisting others' support. Power in the latter sense is then linked with cooperation-building understood as fostering internal goal congruence (Tjosvold, 1984). Cooperation in turn requires an effective organizational information flow, especially in an "upward" direction, which involves both informal as well as institutional mechanisms (Glauser, 1984).

Participatory decision-making is presented as an effective approach to a cooperation-based exercise of power and constructive facilitation of organizational communication. Although there is a gap between rhetoric and practical results for participatory

decision-making (Conway, 1984), it does offer both a way of thinking and a set of methods for facilitating organizational communication (Wood, 1984).

Conflict management, which requires a high level of interpersonal communication skills, is presented as another important application of human relations skills (Filley, 1975; Tropman, 1984; Walton, 1969). The core factors of creating effective groups, adapted for the unique professional-bureaucratic nature of schools, are used for integrating and reinforcing the principles and practices in this part of the course. (see, for example, Zander, 1982).

The Human Environment

The purpose of this concluding section is to enhance sensitivity toward social issues bearing particularly on administrators' human relations competencies. Based on the interests of the administrator trainees and related contextual factors, this part of the course involves a focused look at selected human issues related to schooling. For example, I have used demographic (Ornstein, 1984) and family issues (Thornton & Freedman, 1983) with a semi-structured discussion method.

Conclusion

School administrators exercise an influential role not only in student learning but also in human development generally. While counselor educators are not experts in the field of educational administration, they nevertheless have counseling-specific expertise that is applicable to school administrators. By collaborating with administrator educators in the area of human relations skills, counselor educators may contribute substantially to the broader welfare of students and schools. The course elements presented in this article represent one such collaborative effort.

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